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SEP 26 2005

OFFICE OF PETITIONS

In re Application of
Cassel
Application No. 09/758,615
Filed: January 10, 2001
Attorney Docket No. 05-14973
FOR: KING PIN NUT FOR SKATEBOARD
APPLICATIONS

ON PETITION

This is a decision on the petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a), filed August 1, 2005 (certificate of mailing date July 27, 2005), to revive the above-identified application.

The petition is **DISMISSED**.

Any further petition to revive the above-identified application must be submitted within TWO (2) MONTHS from the mail date of this decision. Extensions of time under 37 CFR 1.136(a) are permitted. The reconsideration request should include a cover letter entitled "Petition under 37 CFR 1.137." This is **not** final agency action within the meaning of 5 U.S.C. § 704.

The above-identified application became abandoned for failure to timely submit the issue fee, publication fee, and corrected formal drawings within three months of mailing of a March 12, 2003 Notice of Allowance and Fee(s) Due and Notice of Allowability, respectively. Accordingly, the above-identified application became abandoned on June 13, 2003. A Notice of Abandonment was mailed on July 18, 2003.

A grantable petition to revive an abandoned application under 37 CFR 1.137(a) must be accompanied by (1) the required reply, unless previously filed. In a nonprovisional application abandoned for failure to prosecute, the required reply may be met by the filing of a continuing application; (2) the petition fee as set forth in § 1.17(l); (3) a showing to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to this paragraph was unavoidable; and (4) any terminal disclaimer (and fee as set forth in § 1.20 (d)) required pursuant to paragraph (c) of this section.

This petition does not satisfy requirements (1) and (3).

Regarding (1), petitioner has still not submitted corrected formal drawings, as is required in the Notice of Allowability, mailed March 12, 2003.

Regarding (3), the showing of record is inadequate to establish unavoidable delay within the meaning of 37 CFR 1.137(a). Specifically, an application is "unavoidably" abandoned only where petitioner, or counsel for petitioner, takes all action necessary for a proper response to the outstanding Office action, but through the intervention of unforeseen circumstances, such as failure of mail, telegraph, telefacsimile, or the negligence of otherwise reliable employees, the response is not timely received in the Office. Ex parte Pratt, 1887 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 31 (Comm'r

Pat. 1887).

The Commissioner may revive an abandoned application if the delay in responding to the relevant outstanding Office requirement is shown to the satisfaction of the Commissioner to have been "unavoidable". 35 U.S.C. § 133. Decisions on reviving abandoned applications have adopted the reasonably prudent person standard in determining if the delay was unavoidable. Ex parte Pratt, 1887 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 31, 32-33 (Comm'r Pat. 1887)(the term 'unavoidable' "is applicable to ordinary human affairs, and requires no more or greater care or diligence than is generally used and observed by prudent and careful men in relation to their most important business"); In re Mattullath, 38 App. D.C. 497, 514-15 (D.C. Cir. 1912); Ex parte Henrich, 1913 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 139, 141 (Comm'r Pat. 1913). In addition, decisions on revival are made on a "case-by-case basis, taking all the facts and circumstances into account." Smith v. Mossinghoff, 671 F.2d 533, 538, 213 USPQ 977, 982 (D.C. Cir. 1982). Finally, a petition to revive an application as unavoidably abandoned cannot be granted where a petitioner has failed to meet his or her burden of establishing the cause of the unavoidable delay. Haines v. Quigg, 673 F. Supp. 314, 5 USPQ2d 1130 (N.D. Ind. 1987).

In the instant case, petitioner has failed to establish that the delay was unavoidable. Petitioner asserts that the delay was unavoidable because petitioner's former attorney failed to advise the inventor that "an issue fee was due and payable." It is noted that a publication fee, issue fee, and corrected formal drawings were due. It is assumed that petitioner is constructively arguing that the former attorney of record failed to inform Mr. Cassel of any of these requirements' due date.

Petitioner was represented by a registered practitioner. The Office must rely on the actions or inactions of the duly authorized and voluntarily chosen representatives of applicants, and the applicants are bound by the consequences of those actions or inactions. Link v. Wabash, 370 U.S. 626, 633-34 (1962). If the attorney made any errors, petitioners are bound by such errors.¹

The attorney must act reasonably and prudently.

If [the] attorney somehow breach[es] his duty of care to plaintiff, then plaintiff may have certain other remedies available to him against his attorney. He cannot, however, ask the court to overlook [the attorney's] action or inaction with regard to the patent application. He hired the [attorney] to represent him. [The attorney's] actions must be imputed to him.²

The Seventh Circuit has stated,

The other assumption is that, if the complainants failed in their application through the

¹ See California Med. Products v. Technol Med. Products, 921 F. Supp. 1219, 1259 (D. Del. 1995) (citing Smith v. Diamond, 209 U.S.P.Q. 1091, 1093 (D.D.C. 1981) (citing Link v. Walbush Railroad Co., 370 U.S. 626, 8 L. Ed. 2d 734, 82 S. Ct. 1386 (1962))).

² Haines v. Quigg, 673 F. Supp. 314, 317, 5 U.S.P.Q. 2d (BNA) 1130 (citing Link v. Walbush Railroad Co., 370 U.S. 626, 8 L. Ed. 2d 734, 82 S. Ct. 1386 (1962)) ("Petitioner voluntarily chose his attorney as his representative in the action and he cannot now avoid the consequences of the acts or omissions of this freely selected agent ... Each party is deemed bound by the acts of his lawyer-agent and is considered to have 'notice of all facts, notice of which can be charged upon the attorney.'") (emphasis added); Inryco, Inc. v. Metropolitan Engineering Co., Inc., 708 F.2d 1225, 1233 (7th Cir. 1983) ("Courts hesitate to punish a client for its lawyers gross negligence, especially when the lawyer affirmatively misled the client" but "if the client freely chooses counsel, it should be bound to counsel's actions."); see also Wei v. State of Hawaii, 763 F. 2d 370, 372 (9th Cir. 1985); LeBlanc v. I.N.S., 715 F.2d 685, 694 (1st Cir. 1983)). See also Smith v. Diamond, 209 U.S.P.Q. (BNA) 1091 (D. D.C. 1981).

negligence of their attorney, the delay would be unavoidable, which is wholly unwarranted in the law. It is of the very nature of negligence that it should not be unavoidable, otherwise it would not be actionable. The negligence of the attorney would be the negligence of the [client]. The purpose of the statute was to put an end to such pleas, and there would be no limit to a renewal of these applications if every application, however remote, could be considered under the plea of negligence of attorneys, by whom their business is generally conducted.³

The United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit has stated,

If we were to hold that an attorney's negligence constitutes good cause for failing to meet a PTO requirement, the PTO's rules could become meaningless. Parties could regularly allege attorney negligence in order to avoid an unmet requirement.⁴

In the instant case, Marie Marden, Vice President of Dark Horse Distribution, Inc., states that the President of Dark Horse Distribution, Inc., who is also Donald Cassel, inventor of the above-identified invention, was not properly informed by his former attorney that the issue fee was due. It is not clear why Ms. Marden is providing a statement, rather than Mr. Cassel. Furthermore, there are no details as to what communication took place between the former attorney and Mr. Cassel or the usual course of communication between the two about patent matters. Ms. Marden asserts that she will not divulge what communication occurred between Dark Horse Distribution, Inc. and the former attorney because of the desire to maintain attorney client privilege. Thus, no evidence has been submitted regarding details as to why the former attorney did not respond in a timely manner.

The fact remains that the Notices in question were addressed to the proper correspondence address of record, that of the former attorney of record. The former attorney was responsible for replying in a timely and complete manner and his client stands in his shoes. The purported negligence of the former attorney of record is binding on petitioner. Delay resulting from a failure in communication between a petitioner and his or her registered practitioner is a delay binding upon petitioner. See In re Kim, 12 USPQ2d 1595 (Comm'r Pat. 1988); Ray v. Lehman, 55 F.3d 606, 610, 34 USPQ2d 1786, 1789 (Fed. Cir. 1989).

ALTERNATIVE VENUE

Petitioner is strongly encouraged to file a petition stating that the delay was unintentional. Public Law 97-247, § 3, 96 Stat. 317 (1982), which revised patent and trademark fees, amended 35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) to provide for the revival of an "unintentionally" abandoned application without a showing that the delay in prosecution or in late payment of an issue fee was "unavoidable." This amendment to 35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) has been implemented in 37 CFR 1.137(b). An "unintentional" petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b) must be accompanied by the \$ 750.00 petition fee.

The filing of a petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b) cannot be intentionally delayed and therefore must be filed promptly. A person seeking revival due to unintentional delay can not make a statement that the delay was unintentional unless the entire delay, including the delay from the date it was

³ Lay v. Indianapolis Brush & Broom Mfg. Co., 120 F. 831, 836 (1903).

⁴ Huston v. Ladner, 973 F.2d 1564, 1567, 23 U.S.P.Q.2D (BNA) 1910 (Fed. Cir. 1992).

discovered that the application was abandoned until the filing of the petition to revive under 37 CFR 1.137(b), was unintentional. A statement that the delay was unintentional is not appropriate if petitioner intentionally delayed the filing of a petition for revival under 37 CFR 1.137(b).

Further correspondence with respect to this matter should be addressed as follows:

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Telephone inquiries concerning this decision should be directed to the undersigned at (571) 272-3230.



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